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Résumé de l'article

Les voyageurs britanniques de l'époque coloniale discutaient souvent des personnes d'ascendance africaine qu'ils rencontraient en Nouvelle-Écosse, en particulier de leurs conditions de vie matérielles et de leurs perspectives d'avenir. Ceux dont les récits furent publiés à l'apogée de la campagne d'abolition de l'esclavage dans l'Empire britannique sont intervenus directement dans le débat au sujet des possibilités de réussite des anciens esclaves devenus libres. Ces auteurs, qui se posaient en observateurs objectifs, présentaient les collectivités noires de Nouvelle-Écosse comme des expériences en matière de liberté de la main-d'oeuvre. L'étude de la façon dont la plupart de ces auteurs choisirent leurs mots et remanièrent leurs observations pour plaider contre l'émancipation des esclaves des Antilles aide à situer la Nouvelle-Écosse et les récits de voyage dans les historiographies intellectuelles de la production des savoirs coloniaux, des débats sur l'esclavage et de la nature du libéralisme au XIX^{e} siècle.

British Travellers, Nova Scotia's Black Communities and the Problem of Freedom to 1860

JEFFREY L. MCNAIRN

Abstract

British travellers commented frequently on those of African descent they encountered in colonial Nova Scotia, especially their material conditions and prospects. Those who published accounts at the peak of the campaign to abolish slavery in the British Empire intervened directly in debates about whether former slaves would prosper under conditions of colonial freedom. They cast themselves as objective imperial observers and Nova Scotia's black communities as experiments in free labour. Attending to how most crafted and reworked their observations to argue against emancipation in the West Indies situates Nova Scotia and travel texts in intellectual histories of the production of colonial knowledge, debates about slavery, and the nature of nineteenth-century liberalism.

Résumé

Les voyageurs britanniques de l'époque coloniale discutaient souvent des personnes d'ascendance africaine qu'ils rencontraient en Nouvelle-Écosse, en particulier de leurs conditions de vie matérielles et de leurs perspectives d'avenir. Ceux dont les récits furent publiés à l'apogée de la campagne d'abolition de l'esclavage dans l'Empire britannique sont intervenus directement dans le débat au sujet des possibilités de réussite des anciens esclaves devenus libres. Ces auteurs, qui se posaient en observateurs objectifs, présentaient les collectivités noires de Nouvelle-Écosse comme des expériences en matière de liberté de la main-d'œuvre. L'étude de la façon dont la plupart de ces auteurs choisirent leurs mots et remanièrent leurs observations pour plaider contre l'émancipation des esclaves des Antilles aide à situer la Nouvelle-Écosse et les récits de voyage dans les historiographies intellectuelles de la production des savoirs coloniaux, des débats sur l'esclavage et de la nature du libéralisme au XIX^e^ siècle.

The American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission visited free black communities in Upper Canada during the Civil War as part of its mandate "to consider and report what measures are necessary ... so as to place the Colored people of the United States in a condition of self-support and self-defense." State fact-finding missions had become integral to policy-making. Yet communities of free blacks in Britain's remaining North American colonies had long been sites for unofficial investigation into the effects of a transition from slavery to freedom. Three decades before the Commission's *Report*, noted British travel author and political economist Harriet Martineau turned to the experience of fugitive slaves in the same colony to counter arguments against the abolition of slavery. In *Tale of Demerara*, one of her *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832–1834), Martineau deployed fiction to argue that slavery was more expensive than free labour and that free trade in sugar was preferable to protection. Travel writing allowed Martineau to substantiate such economic principles by direct observation.[1]

Martineau's example points to the interpenetration of political economy and colonial circumstance in travel texts. From the American Revolution, which brought a sizeable population of sub-Saharan African descent to Nova Scotia, until the American Civil War, which ended slavery on the continent, dozens of British travellers commented on blacks they observed in the colony. Read carefully in conjunction with other sources, their published accounts have been used to deepen our appreciation of the history of black community-formation and agency. They have also been key sources by which to explore the representations of the inferior 'other' that such a history effectively dismantles. Finding familiar racial tropes in these accounts is not difficult, but the intensifying debate about the future of slavery capped by the British Emancipation Act (1833) did more than increase their topicality. While there is a danger of reproducing travellers' objectification of blacks in Nova Scotia as passive subjects of imperial study, this paper attends to how travellers intended their accounts to be read — as contributions to colonial knowledge in the service of the imperial state and thus as sources to explore debates about freedom and slavery rather than the history of blacks in Nova Scotia *per se*.[2]

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1 Samuel Gridley Howe, *The Refugees from Slavery in Canada West: Report to the Freedmen's Inquiry Commission* (Boston, 1864), Harriet Martineau, *Retrospect of Western Travel*, vol. 1 (London, 1838), 244, and Harriet Martineau, *Illustrations of Political Economy*, vol. 2 (London, 1834), esp. 142–3. On the former, see Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*. 2nd ed., (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997 [1971]), 204, 216, 218–19, and Oz Frankel, *States of Inquiry: Social Investigations and Print Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the United States* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 204–33. The support of the SSHRC and my colleague Barrington Walker are gratefully acknowledged.

2 On travel texts and political economy, see Jeffrey L. McNairn, "The Malthusian Moment: British Travellers & the Vindication of Economic Liberalism in the Maritime Countryside," in

Indeed, those travellers who published accounts of Nova Scotia between 1827 and the passage of the Emancipation Act attempted to insert themselves directly into imperial policy-making. They cast the colony's black communities as experiments in free labour and themselves as imperial fact-finders in ways that those who published before 1827 and after the Act did not. By writing principally for a British audience and to inform the imperial state, they also deserve separate study from local commentators, even if they shared similar racial attitudes.[3] The mutual dependence of colonial knowledge and imperial power is now well-established, but institutionalized mechanisms, such as official commissions and reports, maps and surveys, archives and museums, and the census and other forms of enumeration, have been privileged over such non-state actors as travellers.[4] Their efforts at investigation may have lacked official sanction, routine or elaborate infrastructure, but they still sought to gather and transmit knowledge rendered pertinent by the abolition campaign. They attempted to mediate between the British public, contemplating major legislation yet fearful of social turmoil and economic ruin, and one of the empire's subject populations at a moment of intense interest in them.

The direct policy influence of British travellers to Nova Scotia was negligible, but analyzing how they reified the colony's free black communities as sites of imperial investigation situates travel texts and Nova Scotia in the broader British conversation about race and emancipation. Because that conversation was so fraught, it also exposes some of the politics of colonial knowledge. Travellers cast themselves as objective reporters and their observations as transparent social facts able to direct imperial policy. They thereby contributed to a particularly positivistic culture of colonial investigation, but

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Transplanted Subjects: Ideas, Institutions and Social Experience in Post-Revolutionary British North America, ed., Nancy Christie (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 331–4. For how these sources can inform studies of black agency, see Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815–1860* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2006) and for their use in a cultural history of imperial representation, see Jeffrey L. McNairn, "'Everything was new, yet familiar': British Travellers, Halifax and the Ambiguities of Empire," *Acadiensis*, 36, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 28–54.

3 For racial attitudes in Nova Scotia, see Greg Marquis, "Haliburton, Maritime Intellectuals and 'The Problem of Freedom'," in *The Haliburton Bi-centenary Chaplet: Papers presented at the 1996 Thomas Raddall Symposium*, ed., Richard A. Davies (Wolfville, N.S.: Gaspereau Press, 1997), 195–235.

4 Thus, I argue that travel texts contributed to a number of investigative modalities rather than solely the "observational / travel" one identified by Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 3–11. For the British North American context, see, for instance, Bruce Curtis, "Official Documentary Systems and Colonial Government: From Imperial Sovereignty to Colonial Autonomy in the Canadas, 1841–1867,' *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 10, no. 4 (December 1997): 389–417.

also revealed its limits: their observations of Nova Scotia had to be crafted carefully to speak to West Indian policy; they reworked their observations in successive iterations of their case; and despite their best efforts they could not forestall alternative readings of what those facts meant. Finally, attending to their precise argumentation reveals the possibilities of nineteenth-century liberalism and how easily those possibilities were short-circuited. As Mary Louise Pratt has argued, travellers were quintessential economic improvers,[5] but a broad commitment to liberal principles of political economy, empiricism, utilitarian calculation, and instruction led all but one of these observers to oppose abolition rather than slavery. It is a cruel irony that those who fled slavery during the American Revolution or the War of 1812 and repeatedly insisted on their rights as British subjects were revealed before imperial readers primarily as passive victims of a failed experiment in colonial freedom and thus as evidence that slavery ought to persist.

More scholarly attention has been paid to arguments in favour of emancipation than those opposed, especially outside the American South.[6] The relationship between the abolition of slavery and the rise of industrial capitalism has been particularly contentious since Eric Williams' *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), although capitalism is now more often treated as a set of ideas and attitudes towards free labour than a process of production. Seymour Drescher's recent contribution, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (2002), helps to explain how travellers approached free black communities in Nova Scotia and the apparent paradox of their liberal anti-abolitionism.

First, Drescher "traces the intrusion of social science into the politics of slavery." As statistics and the experimental sciences gained cultural prestige, the human sciences, such as political economy, held out the promise that the effects of abolition could be predicted accurately by surveying alternatives to plantation slavery. Thus, "the ascription of experimentation to various changes in Atlantic slavery functioned as an invitation to join a quest for social scientific truths that might assure all the contestants a measured outcome under controlled conditions .... The multitude of imperial colonies and newly created slave societies in the Americas could be considered so many separate laboratories" to test contentious policy options.[7] Several travellers to Nova Scotia took

5 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

6 But see Larry E. Tise, *Proslavery: A History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701–1840* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 75–96; Alvin O. Thompson, "'Happy — Happy Slaves!': Slavery as a Superior State to Freedom," *Journal of Caribbean History*, 29, no. 2 (1995): 93–119; and Srividhya Swaminathan, "Developing the West Indian Proslavery Position after the Somerset Decision," *Slavery & Abolition*, 24, no. 3 (2003): 40–60.

7 Seymour Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 6–7, 89. The increasing emphasis on attitudes and ideas is evident in Thomas Bender, ed., *The*

up the invitation. Comprised of former slaves or their descendants, Nova Scotia's black communities became living commentaries on what Thomas Holt aptly calls "the problem of freedom" — whether formerly coerced labourers could be transformed into voluntary, yet productive ones.[8] They became harbingers of post-emancipation society in a pre-emancipation empire struggling to imagine itself in the absence of slavery.

Second, Drescher concludes that liberal political economists were "at best evasive rather than comforting on the subject of free labor superiority." He focuses on prominent political economists who established its intellectual ascendancy in the same decades that the organized campaign to abolish slavery in the British Empire flourished and on those experiments, such as Sierra Leone and Haiti, that British parliamentarians cited most often. As a result, travel texts are ignored and Nova Scotia appears in his account (and in others on the international history of blacks and the American Revolution) as little more than a way-station for those fleeing the new republic in 1783–1784 only to be transported to Sierra Leone in 1792. Yet British travellers to Nova Scotia confirm Drescher's analysis. They sided not with Harriet Martineau, a fellow travel-author who linked her discussion of colonial blacks to free-labour ideology; but with the political economists she otherwise popularized. Indeed, they insisted that slavery should persist, if not as a superior labour system, at least to guarantee subsistence and as a form of economic tutelage.[9]

The preoccupation with the almost 1,200 who left Nova Scotia for Africa is abetted by current interest in Atlantic history and because they were designated "Nova Scotians" when Sierra Leone came to the attention of British legislators.[10] Of course, the term more rightly applies to the larger number who

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Antislavery Debate: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992) and Drescher's review in *History and Theory*, 32, no. 3 (October 1993): 311–29.

8 Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom: Race, Labor, and Politics in Jamaica and Britain, 1832–1938* (Baltimore, NJ: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), esp. xxii.

9 Drescher, 56, 59, 72, and chap. 4 generally. Drescher at 90 refers to those freed in the American Revolution who were "sent across the Atlantic" and "reached the coast of Africa, via Canada, nearly ten years later." He refers more accurately to Nova Scotia rather than Canada two pages later. See also Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and Their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), Simon Schama, *Rough Crossing: Britain, the Slaves, and the American Revolution* (New York: Ecco Press, 2006), James Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1789–2005* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), and James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

10 Among the British Parliamentary Papers (hereafter BPP), see, for instance, *Report from the Committee on the Petition of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company*, 1802 and 1804, *Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of the Colony of Sierra Leone*, 1827, and *Report from the Select Committee on the Settlements of Sierra Leone and Fernando Po*, 1830.

remained in the colony and to the more than 2,000 black Refugees from the War of 1812, who joined them between 1813 and 1816. That the Jamaican Maroons — initially exiled to Nova Scotia in 1796 but transported to Africa four years later — were a second major component of Sierra Leone's population further directed attention away from Nova Scotia. Yet, by the mid-nineteenth century, approximately 4,900 people of African descent lived in Nova Scotia out of a total population of more than 275,000, concentrated in two all-black communities in the vicinity of Halifax: Preston to the east and Hammond's Plains to the northwest.[11] Indebted to Drescher, this paper shifts attention from blacks who left Nova Scotia to discussions of those who remained and from political economists to travellers whose published accounts wove colony and political economy together with imperial policy.

Nova Scotia was obviously different from Sierra Leone or the Caribbean islands. It was temperate rather than tropical, its population was of predominately European rather than African descent, and its agriculture was conducted primarily on small, owner-occupied farms rather than plantations. Nova Scotia was not, however, irrelevant to debates about slavery in the Caribbean; the contrast could be crucial to comparative analysis. To counter the abolitionist proposition that sugar could be produced in the tropics by the free labour of former slaves, Major James Moody informed the British government,:

> … negro slaves have been liberated, and located in Nova Scotia and in Sierra Leone, in neither of which colonies does slavery exist, and consequently it could have had very little influence in promoting or retarding civilization, and the formation of habits of steady industry among the negroes so placed. In Nova Scotia the liberated negros, under the influence of necessity arising from climate, when left to themselves, though less advanced than the white labourers, yet in general are found to exert a greater portion of steady labour, and to be in a more advanced state of social civilization than the liberated negroes in Sierra Leone.

For Moody, the comparison with Nova Scotia demonstrated that coerced labour was required to produce staples in the tropics.

As part of a broader inquiry, Moody considered it "his duty to observe carefully and minutely, in different colonies" the effects of various factors, such as climate and population density, on the motive to labour and the "progressive civilization of the African race." He cited the famous Prussian explorer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, but, based on "having visited some of the countries to which M. Humboldt refers," Moody felt able to correct his

11 James W.St.G. Walker, "The Establishment of a Free Black Community in Nova Scotia, 1783–1840,' in *The African Diaspora: Interpretative Essays*, eds. Martin L. Kilson and Robert I. Rotberg (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 205–36; and Whitfield.

account.[12] By treating colonies as free-labour experiments, Moody exemplifies several of Drescher's themes, but like British travellers he claimed expertise based on direct colonial observation and found a role for Nova Scotia in explicitly rejecting abolitionist arguments.

Mercantilist Silence

No such role existed until the debate about ending slavery in the empire neared conclusion. Although preoccupied with issues of economic development and labour, the first published travel narrative of Nova Scotia to refer to blacks resident there was remarkably uninterested in slavery or race. Published in the aftermath of the American Revolution, S. Hollingsworth's *Account of the Present State of Nova Scotia* (1786) described Shelburne, recently established by "American loyalists," and nearby Birchtown, "peopled by negroes from New York about 1400 in number, whose labour have been found extremely useful to the white inhabitants, chiefly in reducing very considerably the price of work and various materials the produce of the country."[13] Although denied the status of loyalists, blacks were deemed useful in an under-populated colony. For Hollingsworth, there was no problem of freedom in Nova Scotia.

Published just as the slave trade encountered increasingly organized opposition, Hollingsworth's *Account* is strikingly silent about the legal status of blacks at Birchtown. Finding them labouring for whites, Hollingsworth expressed none of the concern about their "industry" that dominated later accounts and had no need to distinguish the legally free from the enslaved or apprenticed. Like other eighteenth-century mercantilists, Hollingsworth viewed Nova Scotia almost exclusively in terms of its potential contribution to Britain's balance of trade and military power.[14] Only the capital and labour to harvest and export staples, such as timber and naval stores, were needed to realize its potential. That these requirements were racialized at Shelburne was of little concern except to the extent it lowered costs.[15] Uninterested in the utility

12 BPP, *Copy of any further Reports made to His Majesty's Government by Thomas Moody, Esq. ... appointed to inquire into the state of the Slaves, condemned to the Crown ...*, 1828, 146–7. On Moody, see Thompson, 97, 105–6, 110–12.

13 [S. Hollingsworth], *An Account of the Present State of Nova Scotia* (Edinburgh and London, 1786), 106. A French-language edition was published in Paris in 1787. He repeated the description in *The Present State of Nova Scotia with a Brief Account of Canada, and the British Islands on the Coast of North America: The Second Edition, corrected and enlarged* (Edinburgh and London, 1787), 130.

14 Jeffrey L. McNairn, "Meaning and Markets: Hunting, Economic Development and British Imperialism in Maritime Travel Narratives to 1870," *Acadiensis* XXIV, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 5–9.

15 Disbanded soldiers, less sanguine about the effect on wages, rioted at Birchtown in 1784. Local officials were also not convinced that no local "problem of freedom" existed. In his survey completed the same year as Hollingsworth's *Account*, Robert Morse thought "it is known by

of blacks' labour to themselves, Hollingsworth also had no reason to comment on their current conditions or long-term prospects in the colony.

Such silence did not reflect a lack of interest in slavery. Two years after his *Account*, Hollingsworth published a pamphlet on Africa to which he appended *Observations on the Present Application to Parliament for Abolishing Negroe Slavery in the British West Indies*. A consistent mercantilist, Hollingsworth proposed commercial regulations to abolish slavery gradually. By raising the value of slaves, such regulations would motivate planters to treat them more humanely and to adopt less labour-intensive practices.[16] Writing about Nova Scotia, Hollingsworth had focussed on its ability to replace the former New England colonies in supplying fish and timber to the British West Indies, that is, as a source within the empire to sustain the latter's slave-based economy. By contributing to that end, Nova Scotia's blacks were a valuable resource, not part of the analytical frame within which Hollingsworth thought about abolition in the West Indies. Thus, he reported on how sugar was produced from trees in Nova Scotia, but insisted that maple sugar was for domestic consumption only, unlike the colony's other natural resources. Within a few years, however, other abolitionists were looking to it as a free-labour substitute for slave-produced cane sugar.[17] For Hollingsworth, Nova Scotia and the British West Indies complemented each other in an empire of regulated trade; the former appeared in his *Observations ... for Abolishing Negroe Slavery* only as a source for the horses West Indian planters should be encouraged to import to reduce their dependence on slave labour. Even as he contemplated a mercantilist empire without slavery, Hollingsworth did not see the black community in Nova Scotia as an alternative experiment in labour discipline.

Nova Scotia and British Emancipation

It was, however, precisely as an experiment in free labour that the colony's black communities were seen from 1827. Travellers seized the opportunity afforded by the emancipation campaign that culminated in legislation in 1833 to abolish slavery in the empire (outside India) to present themselves as disinterested investigators in the service of empire. While discussing the United

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experience that these persons, brought up in servitude and slavery, want the assistance and protection of a master to make them happy; indeed to preserve them from penury and distress." "Report on Nova Scotia," in *Report on Canadian Archives, 1884*, ed. Douglas Bymer (Ottawa: Maclean, Rogers & Co., 1885), l.

16 S. Hollingsworth, *A Dissertation on the Manners, Governments, and Spirit, of Africa ...* (Edinburgh and London, 1788), 20–2, 24–9, 35–6.

17 Ibid., *Account of the Present State*, 22; and Drescher, 108. Contra Hollingsworth, Tench Coxe, *A View of the United States of America ...* (Dublin, 1795), 65–6, 77–8, 108–17, emphasized Nova Scotia's inability to supply the West Indies and the importance of maple sugar to undercut demand for slave labour.

States in his *Journal*, the Anglican missionary John West insisted that "it is only by *monopoly*, that the slave system can be maintained ... *Free labour* will be brought into competition, and found far more valuable than the labour of slaves; and a *free market* will be opened to a fair competition in the sale of sugar, which will gradually knock off every fetter, and enfranchise millions of our fellow men, who are now enslaved under the guilt of cruelty and injustice." Later in the same text, West was equally clear that a black village he toured in Nova Scotia was comprised of former slaves whose condition there was relevant to broader debates about slavery and freedom.[18]

Yet almost 20 travel narratives incorporating material on the Maritime colonies had been published between Hollingsworth's *Account* and *West's Journal*. The gap reflected, in part, the fewer number of blacks in Nova Scotia after the partial removal of Black Loyalists to Sierra Leone in 1792 and the Trelawny Maroons in 1800 (the latter only having arrived in 1796). Neither relocation was mentioned — even by those who discussed Shelburne's precipitous decline. Those who visited Halifax would almost certainly have encountered blacks there, but even the Wiltshire clothier Henry Wansey, who deemed the presence of "many negroes" a defining feature of the port, found no reason to comment further. Thus, the only reference in the 1816 *Narrative* of the Wesleyan missionary Joshua Marsden was to "the cottage of the Negro" as a site of piety among the poor. Continuing his mission in Bermuda, Marsden blamed slavery for "many of the vices of the blacks." "If they are lazy and careless," for instance, "it is because they reap little or no benefit from their labours."[19] That Nova Scotia's predominately free black population could be used to test such free-labour principles seems not to have occurred to Marsden any more than it had to Hollingsworth three decades before.

West's *Journal of a Mission*, then, marks the emergence of Nova Scotia's blacks as a significant object of study in the context of the settlement of the Refugees and the renewed campaign after 1823 to abolish slavery. Based on his 1825–1826 fact-finding tour for the British and Foreign Bible Society and the New England Company, West's *Journal* was followed by the anonymous *Letters from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick* (1829) attributed to William Hunter, a "Reverend Gentleman" employed by a Nova Scotia family as a tutor;[20] Lieutenant Edward Thomas Coke's *A Subaltern's Furlough* (1833); and, especially, two works by John MacGregor (1828 and 1832), a failed colo-

18 John West, *A Journal of a Mission to the Indians of the British Provinces, of New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia …* (London, 1827), 214–15, 248–52. Emphasis in the original unless otherwise indicated.

19 Henry Wansey, *The Journal of an Excursion to the United States of North America, in the Summer of 1794 ...* (London, 1796), 24; and Joshua Marsden, *The Narrative of a Mission to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Somers Islands ...* (Plymouth-Dock, 1816), 68, 140–2.

20 Review, *The Nova Scotian, or Colonial Herald* (15 September 1830).

nial merchant and office-holder turned political economist and ardent free-trader; and Captain William Scarth Moorsom's *Letters from Nova Scotia* (1830) where he was stationed as a military engineer after 1827.

Although only West was in the region as part of a formal inquiry, MacGregor (1797–1857) and Moorsom (1804–1863) were committed to influencing the debate about emancipation. Both devoted an entire chapter to free blacks in Nova Scotia, a degree of attention disproportionate to their demographic weight in the colony and in marked contrast to their almost complete absence from Moorsom's extensive unpublished travel diaries, which formed the basis of his *Letters*. These authors' opinions prior to visiting Nova Scotia are not known. MacGregor, educated by his father on Prince Edward Island, encountered former slaves there where he served briefly as sheriff and witnessed several executed for theft. Moorsom, the son of an Admiral, was educated at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. His account of blacks in Nova Scotia appeared, like MacGregor's, in his first publication.[21] For Marsden, Bermuda stood for the problem of slavery; with the British abolition campaign, Nova Scotia now stood for the problem of freedom.

These authors first had to establish that the fate of free blacks in Nova Scotia could reveal the effects of a transition from slavery to freedom. They did so by insisting, in MacGregor's words, that "*Slavery* does not exist in Nova Scotia," which instead had become "a rendezvous for freed negroes." The descriptor conveyed both their slave past and 'free' present as former slaves or their descendants. For Moorsom, 'freed' also conveyed the sense that emancipation had resulted from Britain's initiative, not that of blacks themselves "who, being thus snatched from a state of slavery, were emancipated on touching the Nova Scotia soil."[22] Their subsequent fate was thus a proxy for the likely outcome of any legislation to free slaves elsewhere in the empire. While travellers differed on how black Refugees had come to Nova Scotia — MacGregor more accurately thought that they had "fled from their masters and were received by the English Admiral"[23]

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21 For MacGregor, see entries by J.M.R. in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Henry Parris in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and J.M. Bumsted in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*; for Moorsom, see entries by H.M.C., Mike Chrimes, and Carol M. Whitfield respectively. None of these items makes references to their subject's views on slavery. For MacGregor's early experience with blacks, see BPP, *Report From the Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions ...*, 1832, at questions 8446, 8450, 8452. For Moorsom's unpublished travel diaries, see British Library, India Office, Moorsom Collection, Mss Eur E299 items 23 and 24.

22 John MacGregor, *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America* (London, 1828), 125, repeated without emphasis in John MacGregor, *British America*, vol. 2 (London, 1832), 205–6. "Freed Negroes" was a subtitle in Moorsom, *Letters from Nova Scotia: Comprising Sketches of a Young Country* (London, 1830), 125–9. See also Moorsom, 306, and MacGregor, *British America*, vol. 2, 204.

23 MacGregor, *British America*, vol. 1, 205.

— associating geographic movement from the United States to Nova Scotia with the legal transition from slavery to freedom was common. It radically simplified the diverse experiences of black Nova Scotians and elided the history of slavery in the colony,[24] but neatly contrasted Nova Scotia to the British West Indies and freedom to slavery.

How had this early experiment in colonial emancipation turned out? Not well, according to these observers. MacGregor reported that blacks at Hammond's Plains were "wretched in the extreme," living "in a state of miserable poverty." Indeed, "miserable" was the favourite adjective applied to the region's free blacks. Lieutenant Coke thought they were predominately "idle, roving and dirty vagabonds," while the narrator of *Letters from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick* reported seeing children in "almost total nakedness" living in a "hovel."[25] Interest in these communities coincided with the aftermath of an outbreak of scarlet fever in 1826–1827 and successive crop failures that had reduced many to dire circumstances and dependence on charity and government relief.[26] The poverty was real and glaring; what it meant was not.

Hollingsworth had emphasized blacks' contribution to staple production in Nova Scotia, but after the Napoleonic wars demand for cheap labour lessened and the colony's future was re-imagined in agricultural terms. The "smallness of their number," Captain Moorsom now concluded, "is a matter of political gratulations rather than regret." Imperial policy had united "political freedom and physical starvation, under British auspices in Nova Scotia." Nearly 200 pages later, he generalized the point into a general maxim: "provincial observation has long led me to consider freed negroes and absence of wealth, as circumstances universally more or less concomitant." It was a troubling conclusion for anyone committed to the idea that free labour was economically superior to slavery. Local newspaperman Joseph Howe may have had Moorsom in mind when he summarized the reaction of such observers in his own travel sketches: "they are a burden to the country, says Political Economy." As Howe recognized, travellers such as Moorsom applied a narrow test of success mea-

24 Harvey Amani Whitfield, "Black Loyalists and Black Slaves in Maritime Canada," *History Compass*, 5/6 (2007): 1980–97, argues that the elision remains true of later historians; it was not unique to them. Only MacGregor acknowledged that slavery had existed, but claimed in *British America*, vol. 1, 204, that slaves from the United States "were whenever they chose, liberated." The focus here on Nova Scotia's place in debates about slavery elsewhere also diverts attention from emancipation in the colony itself, on which see Barry Cahill, "Slavery and the Judges of Loyalist Nova Scotia," *University of New Brunswick Law Journal*, 43 (1994), 73–135.

25 MacGregor, *Sketches*, 126; Ibid., *British America*, vol. 2, 85, 205–6, 207, 318; and Moorsom, 9, 126–7, 130. Coke, *A Subaltern's Furlough* ..., vol. 2 (New York, 1833), 129; and [William Hunter], *Letters from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, illustrative of their Moral, Religious, and Physical Circumstances, During the Years 1826, 1827, and 1828* (Edinburgh, 1829), 114.

26 Whitfield, 58.

sured almost exclusively in economic terms. Had they compared Nova Scotia to slave societies, the criteria abolitionists emphasized, such as moral and religious change, new gender roles and domestic arrangements, and the end to physical and psychological brutality, might have entered into the balance between slavery and freedom.[27] Yet the gap between freedom's promise and its material outcome in Nova Scotia required explanation. Why had the experiment failed?

Before they could credibly answer such a fraught question, travellers had to establish themselves as expert witnesses. Moorsom's appeal to "provincial observation" was central to their experimental methodology. It privileged what outsiders such as themselves saw as the basis of colonial knowledge over what blacks themselves said or what those at a distance could learn. Convinced that errors in policy reflected imperfect knowledge rather than ill-will or conflicting values, MacGregor conceded that "to a man unacquainted with our possessions abroad, it might be difficult to account for the poverty-stricken and unhappy condition of these unfortunate beings." Direct observation, however, rendered the causes "distinct and evident." In a debate that pitted humanitarians against West Indian interests, travellers portrayed themselves as neutral observers of an unmediated and verifiable economic reality. Thus, MacGregor insisted that, based on such observations, his prescriptions were "unbiassed by prejudice or by interest." The reviewer of *British America* for *Blackwood's Magazine* judged that "details so copious had been collected so laboriously," that MacGregor had indeed brought "within the light of palpable evidence what might else have appeared mere conjectural speculation."[28] Seeking cultural capital in a genre often marked by amusing anecdote or tales of doubtful veracity, travellers celebrated the culture of the transparent social fact, offering the deceptive certainty of local economic facts to arbitrate intense disagreement. They sought influence by denying that they did anything other than observe and report a colonial reality that spoke for itself.

Travellers also emphasized provincial observation to distinguish themselves from what they deemed the ill-informed sentiment sustaining British abolitionism. Anticipating later economic historians such as David Eltis, they saw economic and moral arguments about slavery in tension. "It was beautiful to talk of liberty, &c.," warned a local figure in Hunter's *Letters*, but the economic costs were not thereby negated. Coke thought the decision to transport black refugees to Nova Scotia inexplicable given that two previous relocations

27 Moorsom, 71–2, 129, 306; and Joseph Howe, *Western and Eastern Rambles: travel sketches in Nova Scotia*, M.G. Parks, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 55–6, org. *Nova Scotian* (31 July 1828). Howe later defended Moorsom's *Letters* in the same paper. On measures of success, see Drescher, 89.

28 MacGregor, *British America*, vol. 1, vii, and vol. 2, 208, 209; and *Blackwood's Magazine* 31 (1832): 909.

of blacks to the colony had led to discontent and subsequent removal to Sierra Leone. MacGregor referred to the same decision as "most absurd philanthropy," and while Moorsom understood how "their origin, their story, and their condition ... shed an almost romantic halo around them ... I confess I cannot fully accord with these compassionate ideas." Visual inspection revealed that well-intentioned efforts to transform slaves into free subjects had only resulted in communities of miserable poverty. "As if nothing else were wanting to crown this folly," MacGregor despaired, Britain had recently compensated the United States for its lost property, a "kind-hearted" but "credulous" act.[29] The implication was clear: credulity was about to issue in economic folly again.

Only inquiry into blacks already emancipated offered an evidence-based way forward. Thus, Moorsom presented his findings about the paltry economic contribution of free blacks as an answer to "politico-economical queries" from his cousin, the commodore, while topics such as "Indians, slavery, and education" were deemed "Christian and moral; — feminine subjects without a doubt" — addressed in the next chapter "To Mrs ——." Acknowledging the prominent role of women in British abolitionist circles, Moorsom's shift of interlocutors also signalled how a policy conflict had been reconfigured as a conflict between head and heart. Economic subjects and those who reported on them belonged to the former. Moorsom regretted the absence of statistics to answer such queries, but compensated for inadequate colonial investment in knowledge infrastructure by substituting his own "personal impressions produced by casual observation ... and by conversation."[30]

While John West agreed that the Nova Scotia experiment had failed, he was otherwise an exception among this cohort of travel authors. As an evangelical missionary, West emphasized the "sympathy" awakened in him by preaching to free blacks and witnessing the limits of previous efforts to assist them. He adopted none of the language of experiment and, not coincidentally, alone explicitly affirmed free labour's superiority to slavery. As was common among abolitionists, political economy reinforced rather than confounded West's primarily religious and moral objections to slavery.[31] The benevolent impulse to assist colonial blacks, however, led West to endorse their removal — that "they should return to their native soil" in Africa. As endorsed by West, African colonization was not just an alternative to slavery since the blacks he observed in Nova Scotia were already free; nor was it a response to fears about

29 MacGregor, *British America*, vol. 2, 206, 209–10; [Hunter], 116–17; Coke, vol. 2, 128–9; and Moorsom, 127–9. The Anglo-American Convention of 1818 referred the issue of compensation to the Russian Emperor to arbitrate. The final settlement was not ratified until 1827.

30 Moorsom, 42–3, 107–8.

31 David Turley, "British antislavery reassessed," in *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780–1850*, eds. Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 194–9.

the danger free blacks might pose to racial slavery since slavery had already atrophied in the colony. Rather, removal was designed to achieve racial homogeneity. West believed that white prejudice and blacks' inadequacy as economic free agents made it impossible to incorporate them into Nova Scotian society as he proposed for the colony's Aboriginal population. They had to be removed. The problem of freedom could not be solved in North America.[32]

Other travellers did not explore options to alleviate the plight of Nova Scotia's free blacks, but instead explained it to bolster arguments against freeing other blacks. Despite commonplaces about the impact of climate on labour discipline, Nova Scotia's harsh winters formed no part of their explanation. By contrast, climate loomed large when British officials considered resettling various groups of African descent in the colony or relocating those already there back to the United States or to Sierra Leone or Trinidad. It was also a factor blacks themselves emphasized.[33] Travellers seeking to promote agricultural settlement by European emigrants had reason to discount the limits of Nova Scotia's climate. Moreover, drawing attention to climate might have reminded readers how different Nova Scotia was from the West Indies and thus risked undermining the relevance of the former to debates about the latter.

If climate was ignored, lack of adequate assistance was rejected. Indeed, MacGregor insisted that black Nova Scotians had been afforded "every facility": lands had been laid out and agricultural implements and rations provided. Former slaves remained poor while most white emigrants settled nearby prospered without public provisioning on what MacGregor considered similar land. If the fault for their anomalous economic outcome lay in neither Nova Scotia's physical attributes nor its government, it could only be attributed to blacks themselves, "to no cause but the absence of steady well-directed industry, and judicious management."[34] Free blacks were poor because they were not liberal economic agents.

But that begged the question of why former slaves lacked such attributes or had failed to acquire them once they were legally free, had access to supposedly adequate resources, and could emulate their more successful neighbours. In his 1828 account, MacGregor listed three possible reasons: first,

32 West, 228–31, 249–52. The village he visited was likely near Digby. I am indebted here to Douglas R. Egerton, "'Its Origin is not a Little Curious': A New Look at the American Colonization Society," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 5 (Winter 1985): 463–80; and Brian Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 81, 98–101.

33 MacGregor, *British America*, vol. 2, 204. Moorsom, 127 and Coke, vol. 2, 129, are two cursory references to climate. On climate as a central concern, see, for instance, John N. Grant, "The 1821 Emigration of Black Nova Scotians to Trinidad," *Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly*, 2, no. 1 (1972): 283–92; and Ibid., *The Maroons in Nova Scotia* (Halifax, N.S.: Formac Publishing Co., 2002), esp. 44, 73–7.

34 MacGregor, *British America*, vol. 2, 206–9.

the legacy of slavery might have "extinguished in them the spirit that endures present difficulties and privations, in order to attain future advantages"; second, the legacy of racism might have made them conscious that "they are an unimportant and distinct race, in a country where they feel that they must ever remain a separate people"; and third, an affinity for servitude might have meant that "they find it more congenial to their habits to serve others, either as domestic servants, or labourers, by which they make sure of the wants of the day." One thing was certain: "they prefer servitude and always live more comfortably in that condition than they do when working on their own account."[35] They failed the basic test for liberal inclusion.

The list oscillated uncomfortably between institutional explanations, such as slavery on which abolitionists naturally focussed, and group-based ones, such as vague, unexplained habits. All three, however, were race-specific in two senses. First, neither MacGregor nor other travellers drew lessons about labour discipline in a post-slave society from their observations of white emigrants. Yet European emigrants' experience as free labour in a predominately agricultural colony with a low population to land ratio was directly relevant to debates about whether large-scale commercial agriculture was possible without slavery in West Indian colonies where population increase had yet to press against finite land. In 1830, Edward Gibbon Wakefield argued that relatively easy access to land in frontier colonies ensured that free labour would reject intensive, export-oriented forms of farm production such as plantations in favour of more subsistence-oriented owner-occupier farms. Travellers could have used their discussion of Nova Scotia's agricultural landscape with its large number of petty producers and the high cost of rural labour to bolster such race-blind analyses of slavery's utility in certain colonial contexts.[36]

Second, even if they derived their prescriptions entirely from Nova Scotia's blacks, travellers could have explained their economic fate the same way they explained the relative poverty of other groups — that their wants were few and too easily satisfied. In the absence of master, employer or landlord, only greater economic wants supplied the incentive to work harder and more effectively. The hovels blacks were seen to inhabit could have been evidence of insufficient artificial wants to enforce greater labour discipline, just as slovenly agriculture was for Acadians or Highland Scots. Extending this explanation to free blacks would have served travellers well. Philanthropy could have been denigrated further; any aid blacks had received could be blamed for further undermining their need to labour. It would also have appealed to travellers' intended audience since it was the explanatory framework British policy-makers and West Indian planters applied to blacks in the Caribbean. Whereas British

35 Ibid., *Sketches*, 126.

36 Drescher, 56–8 and Holt, 73–5, 79.

policy-makers eschewed race-based arguments, British travellers to Nova Scotia sought to influence their deliberations by racializing those they observed.[37]

MacGregor left the region in 1827, settling in Liverpool where he pursued a brief, unsuccessful mercantile career and met the political economist James Deacon Hume. In 1828, Hume became Joint Secretary to the Board of Trade and MacGregor published his *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies*. His two-volume *British America* followed four years later when he headed to France to compile commercial statistics, presumably with Hume's encouragement.[38] The Maritime colonies occupied almost twice the space in the 1832 volumes they had in the 1828 one, but the number of pages devoted to Nova Scotia's free blacks increased sixfold and now comprised their own chapter. Amid the mass anti-slavery campaign of 1830–1831, MacGregor increased the prominence of his account of former slaves in the colony.

From the 1828 version, MacGregor retained the list of three possible explanations for the economic failure of former slaves, but recast the entire passage by inserting two words. The cause of their poverty was now "more properly" that blacks preferred serving others to economic independence — not the legacy of slavery or racism. MacGregor thereby absolved Britain and its white subjects of even partial responsibility for the poverty at Hammond's Plains. Rather incredibly, he now asserted that "even when in Africa, in his freest state, it would require the operations of useful and liberal instruction for more than one generation, to adapt him for acting, according to his own free will, with the steady industry, good management, and discretion, necessary to render his condition equally happy" with Europeans settled in North America. Even in the absence of slavery and racism, blacks were ill-equipped to survive the rigours of colonial freedom.

MacGregor rejected the idea that "slavery is the most happy condition in which negroes can live" as "revolting," but coming as it did at the height of the abolition campaign the concession seems unctuous; it was certainly without practical import since "all my observations, in our colonies, have led me to conclude ... that the attempts hitherto made to render the freed negroes more happy or more virtuous than they were as slaves, have been unsuccessful." In case readers missed the point, MacGregor continued, "that unless the West India negroes be gradually prepared for personal liberty, they will, on obtaining their freedom, become objects of much greater commiseration than they now are in a state of bondage." By denying that slavery itself had deformed blacks' eco-

37 On "artificial wants" as the free-labour equivalent of the slave-master's whip, see McNairn, "Malthusian Moment," 344–53; Holt, xxii, 43–4, 47, 279; and Drescher, 99, and on race in the British debate, 81, 87, 128–9.

38 Parris and Lucy Brown, *The Board of Trade and the Free-Trade Movement, 1830–1842* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), 86–7.

nomic subjectivity, MacGregor could call for its persistence as a probationary trial for freedom rather than its starkest denial. MacGregor worked especially hard to ensure that the message from Nova Scotia was unambiguous. There was no need to speculate about the consequences of emancipation in the West Indies because "the history and present condition of the freed negroes of Nova Scotia fully substantiate these assertions." Those who had been *free negroes* in 1828 became 'freed negroes' in 1832, who, at MacGregor's hands, warned against legislating freedom elsewhere in the empire.[39]

Charged with assessing the expediency of such legislation, the 1832 select committee of the British House of Commons on the Extinction of Slavery, on which abolitionists were well-represented, accepted Hammond's Plains as "an experiment of labour" (question 8455) from which an "opinion of free labour" (8470) might be formed.[40] MacGregor was called to testify and his chapter about the "freed Negroes" of Nova Scotia was read into the minutes. William Meir, who had owned a plantation in Georgia until 1817, had already testified that he "never understood" former slaves "were in a happy condition" in Nova Scotia. Indeed, Meir told the committee that one of his slaves who had been transported there at end of the War of 1812 had returned to his family and Meir in Georgia (5525–5526). But dated, largely second-hand, and anecdotal evidence from a former slave-owner was unlikely to be accepted as a basis for imperial policy.

Thus, when MacGregor appeared two weeks later, the select committee sought to ascertain his credibility: he had no connection to West Indian property although he had visited the islands often (8387, 8406–8408) and stood by his recent account of Hammond's Plains (8399–8400), which the committee was anxious to confirm was "the result of your own ocular inspection" (8401). MacGregor happily assumed his allotted role as impartial investigator: "I state merely that which I conceive to be facts" (8439). But the committee did not accept the implication that his conclusions flowed inexorably from such facts, probing the weak links in MacGregor's case with considerable skill. Questioners forced him to concede that he had seen industrious blacks in Nova Scotia (8397), that he had never visited Africa to observe conditions there (8409), and that his negative assessment of the labour discipline of the Jamaican Maroons while in Nova Scotia and of black loyalists removed to Sierra Leone was based on second-hand accounts others disputed (8415–8416, 8424, 8428–8430). Moreover, even if it accepted MacGregor's view of the Nova Scotia experiment, the committee sought to limit its relevance to the West Indies, wondering aloud if the soil at Hammond's Plains was "sterile" (8453),

39 MacGregor, *British America*, vol. 2, 207–10, and *Sketches*, 126. MacGregor's reference in 1828 to "the unfortunate negroes in the West Indies and America" also narrowed in 1832 to only the former, underlining his focus on the British policy debate.

40 BBP, *Extinction of Slavery…*, 3, on which see Drescher, 125, 265 n9.

if the colony's climate was "at all congenial to persons born under a tropical sun" (8454–8455), and, especially, if inadequate benevolent "instruction and education" accounted for the lack of progress there (8440, 8449, 8456–8472). MacGregor had successfully brought his colonial knowledge to bear on imperial policy-making; his attempt to control its meaning failed.

It was failure of a different sort when the Society for the Abolition of Slavery published its *Analysis* of the committee's report and an edited version of its minutes. It deleted MacGregor's testimony and his chapter on Nova Scotia's free blacks entirely, explaining that "as it contains nothing which at all tends to throw light on the present inquiry, we pass it over in silence." The numerous and generally positive reviews of MacGregor's books did likewise. The *Literary Gazette*, for instance, recommended *British America* to those interested in "the great questions of political economy" colonies raised, but thought it unfortunate that authors "strike a deadly blow at their own fair fame by obtruding themselves forward as champions upon debatable ground."[41] When they obtruded, their claims of impartiality or of the transparency of social facts could not protect their observations from being hijacked to alternative political ends or deflected entirely.

Yet MacGregor defended his conclusions before the Extinction Committee vigorously. Reinforcing the distinction between economics and philanthropy, he insisted that the problem was not a lack of religious teaching but the absence of "useful instruction, such as cultivating the soil, mechanical arts, and the best mode of reconciling their minds to habits of industry" (8470). MacGregor also grew even more insistent that the best policy was a period of enforced liberal tutelage rather than immediate freedom. In *British America*, he had proposed a period of "more than one generation," but challenged by legislators with opposing views, he now estimated it would "require at least three generations to direct the minds of people, brought up as the negroes are, to steady pursuits" (8461); evidence enough that colonial facts did not speak for themselves.

Other travel-authors reinforced MacGregor's recommendation. Colonial inspection convinced both William Scarth Moorsom and William Hunter that "instantaneous manumission" was unwise. Hunter used his fictive colonial interlocutor to drive home the point that abolitionists should not campaign for "the immediate emancipation of our West Indian slaves, but the gradual development of their intellectual and moral principles, that they may be enabled to act for themselves."[42] Free blacks in Nova Scotia were used to argue that free-

41 *Analysis of the Report of a Committee of the House of Commons on the Extinction of Slavery* (London, 1833), 199, on which see Frankel, 194–5. *Literary Gazette* (10 March and 25 August 1832), 148–9, 534–5, quotation at 148; *Athenaeum* (3 and 10 March 1832), 137–8, 158–9; *Literary Guardian* (10 and 17 March 1832), 369–73, 387–90; *Spectator* (10 March 1832), 233–4; *London Sun*, copied *Nova Scotian* (13 May 1832); and *Blackwood's Magazine* 31 (1832).

42 Moorsom, *Letters*, 131, and [Hunter], 114–15, 117.

dom, far from a prerequisite for learning how to be free as abolitionists contended, produced only greater misery.

British travellers to Nova Scotia thus shared with West Indian planters the critique of immediate or early abolition as ill-informed and counterproductive, but portrayed themselves as neutral observers rather than interested participants. Moreover, by comparing the fate of free blacks and white emigrants in a colony without slavery, travellers could argue against rapid abolition without defending slavery in principle or its actual practise in the West Indies. Nor did reporting from Nova Scotia give travellers a basis to recommend specific and inevitably controversial reforms to the institution to transform the denial of freedom into a preparatory stage for it. As a result, they diverted attention away from the problem of slavery to the problem of freedom. Yet their emphasis on indeterminate gradualism became more extreme as British abolitionists shifted to immediatism by 1830. The contrast, however, followed logically from their emphasis on the economics of freedom which invited considerations of expediency and intermediate alternatives to slavery. Immediatism, on the other hand, reflected an emphasis on the moral problem of slavery as a sin with which there could be neither temporizing nor compromise.[43]

It is relatively easy to debunk these observers' accounts. While an older generation of historians accepted that the psychological damage of slavery and the need to adjust to a free-labour environment helped to account for blacks' relative material poverty, later scholars point instead to the considerable obstacles blacks struggled against. On being transported to Nova Scotia, the Refugees received land insufficient for agricultural independence; no more than ten acres of generally poor quality. Moreover, rather than freehold grants they could have converted into capital, they received licenses of occupation that effectively tied them to their inadequate holdings. "Thus from the outset," one of their foremost historians concludes, "the refugee settlements were doomed to poverty and economic marginality." Nova Scotia was not a fair trial of free-labour ideology. With almost wilful ignorance, travellers' texts took no note of these factors. Only recently has it been suggested that the experience of slavery and racism may indeed have shaped the motives of post-emancipation blacks to labour, causing them to value a land-based autonomy, family unification, and community-building over profit maximization.[44]

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43 David Brion Davis, "The Emergence of Immediatism in British and American Antislavery Thought," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 49, no. 2 (September 1962): 220–2, 225, 228.

44 For the older approach, see G.A. Rawlyk, "The Guysborough Negroes: A Study in Isolation," *Dalhousie Review*, 48, no. 1 (Spring 1968): 24–5, and Winks, 124–7. For the dominant social-history approach that emphasizes community-building and agency, see Walker, quotation at 229, and Whitfield. For the latest suggestion, see W. Bryan Rommel-Ruiz, "Colonizing the Black Atlantic: The African Colonization Movements in Postwar Rhode Island and Nova Scotia," *Slavery and Abolition* 27, no. 3 (December 2006): 349–65.

Aside from questions of accuracy and influence, MacGregor's example highlights the tension between a strident faith in the power of unmediated social fact and the care taken to deploy observations in carefully scripted ways and in different iterations which nonetheless remained vulnerable to alternative readings. Observing economic conditions could reveal neither unobserved economic norms nor why blacks lacked the subjectivity deemed essential to colonial prosperity. Merely listing possible explanations, as he had in 1828, conceded as much. To forestall the obvious inference that slavery and racism were to blame, MacGregor had appealed to Africa, not to the colonial observations on which his claim to expertise rested. The Extinction Committee realized as much.

Moorsom's more or less parallel account of a visit to Hammond's Plains in the same years further highlights the fragility of colonial knowledge and the importance of attending to how it was marshalled, as much as to the broader colonialist discourses common to such texts. Moorsom may have consulted the same local sources as MacGregor[45] or have read MacGregor's earlier *Sketches* for his argument proceeded much like MacGregor's: "Examine the country in the neighbourhood of Hammond's Plains or of Preston ... and then look at the white settlers around them. How comes it that the latter have, in many instances, commenced with equal capital, viz. a pair of hands, — have laboured on a soil of *worse* quality — have received no provincial aid, and yet have arrived at a state of comparative independence and comfort?" The answer — "simply — industry" — could be verified visually. Moorsom alone, however, recorded an interview with a Nova Scotian of African descent. Given his evident poverty, he asked "why do you stay here? why not go back to your old master, in the States?" Moorsom might have welcomed the answer he got as an endorsement of a foundational Lockean and abolitionist principle — "cause, what I works for here, I gets" — but instead he presented it as part of the reason blacks refused to move to other countries or to better locations in Nova Scotia.[46] Rather than exploring further how they understood work and their material conditions or their own motives for rejecting slavery and relocation, Moorsom followed MacGregor by extrapolating from what he saw to the motives for labour. Travellers not only supplanted blacks as key witnesses to their own experience, but also denied them an explicit role in informing their testimony. Inspection at a distance sufficient to occlude individuals and their diverse experiences defined colonial knowledge, not interviewing.

45 Although Thomas Chandler Haliburton resided in Halifax in these years, if he was among their sources, MacGregor and Moorsom ignored his history of slavery in the colony and especially his emphasis on climate in *An historical and statistical account of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1829). On the other hand, Coke's account seems to have been derived largely from Haliburton at vol. 2, 291–2.

46 Moorsom, *Letters*, 126–8.

Poverty amid colonial opportunity told Moorsom what it had MacGregor — that most blacks "prefer even the approach of starvation, to the steady exertion necessary to provide for their own support." To explain the supposed weakness of this basic motive to labour, Moorsom nonetheless departed significantly from MacGregor in ways that were more sympathetic, even as they reinforced the view of them as passive victims. Moorsom conceded that "we must not condemn those whose faculties" were harmed by the injustice of slavery and then "suffered to find their own level among those of a free people. Their palliative plea in our minds must be the reflection that our policy brought them into this condition." As confirmation, Moorsom pointed, not to Africa as MacGregor had, but to "detached families of negroes" in Nova Scotia. Although "still miserably poor," the descendants of slaves brought by loyalists to Tracadie were better off than the black Refugees at Hammond's Plains because, Moorsom argued, they had not themselves been slaves. Thus, "a state of slavery, as well as the act of subsequent instantaneous manumission, was unknown — expect as infants." To repeat the mistake by expecting slaves elsewhere to exercise economic freedom effectively once emancipated was sheer folly.[47]

Moorsom thus shared MacGregor's rejection of rapid emancipation, but suggested a shorter transition-period. More importantly, by shifting explanatory weight from blacks to slavery, Moorsom created crucial interpretative space to overturn opposition to abolition altogether. If slavery was unjust and the source of economic failure in Nova Scotia, could its persistence elsewhere in any form be the solution? Moorsom also opened the door to recasting the comparison with "white men in this country," any number of whom, according to "the Coloured People at Preston," "similarly placed ... in a strange country, and beneath a rigorous climate, after being recently relieved from the associations and pressure of slavery and the heat of a southern sun, would have for many years presented the same spectacle that the coloured people of Preston have exhibited." Their "hopeless poverty" was indeed a "spectacle" for all to see, but more than just objects to gaze upon, blacks participated in debates about the problem of colonial freedom.[48]

The significance of Moorsom's seemingly minor deviation from MacGregor's account is confirmed by the opposite effect time spent in England

47 Ibid., 128–9, 130–1. The entry in his unpublished travel diary for 12 September 1828, E299, item 24, 141–2, explains their relative prosperity by the fact that they were not refugees; an explanation without clear policy implications for the abolition debate. On this community, see Rawlyk. MacGregor testified before the Extinction Committee that he had interviewed blacks in Nova Scotia (8433), but quoted none in his published accounts.

48 "Petition of the Colored People at Preston" to Lieutenant Governor Viscount Falkland, 1841, reproduced in C.B. Fergusson, *A Documentary Study of the Establishment of the Negroes in Nova Scotia between the War of 1812 and the Wining of Responsible Government* (Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1948), 115.

during the final abolition campaign had on them. If MacGregor's views hardened, Moorsom later claimed that his visit home in 1829–1830 led him "to consider the subject of Negro Slavery more closely" such that, on his return to the colony, he "devoted some leisure to obtain a more intimate personal acquaintance with the condition of the Negro Settlement at Hammond's Plains." The acquaintance may have been more intimate, but it resulted in a systematic report to a Halifax benevolence committee and ultimately the colonial governor based on facts "open to the examination of all who will make enquiry upon the spot."[49] Moorsom turned, for instance, to demography to determine material circumstances just as those assessing conditions on West Indian plantations did, confident that "to those who have made statistics their study, these facts will afford a conclusive inference of the miserable state of this settlement." Emphasizing local verification invited revision — his own included — but Moorsom's faith in the ultimate transparency of colonial facts remained undiminished.

While both his report and published *Letters* adopted an experimental and comparative approach and identified a lack of industrious habits and the deleterious effects of slavery as the cause of poverty, the 1831 report placed colonial inquiry at the service of the benevolent aims his travel narrative had rejected. To the reasons for the community's relative poverty, Moorsom now added blacks' subordinate legal status in Nova Scotia, the lack of secure title to their land, the inadequacy of that land, and the extent of white prejudice. He detailed the slow accumulation of capital by several families and the variety of trades they pursued. Rather than juxtapose "detached" black families to those at Hammond's Plains, Moorsom now found greater "energy" within the community itself among blacks born or raised in Nova Scotia. The overall effect was to emphasize the obstacles blacks faced, their considerable efforts to overcome them, the limits of the assistance they had received, and their just claims to further aid and protection.

Moorsom concluded his report not with a warning against freeing the empire's slaves precipitously, but with the conviction that further enquiry would "not only remove from the enquirer all surprise at the backward state of this settlement compared to those of the white people in the neighbourhood, but would lead him to wonder that it should still continue to offer such promise of future prosperity." It was a far more optimistic reading of post-emancipation society, even if not necessarily an endorsement of rapid abolition. The expectations of "the friends of the Negro" (among whom Moorsom now seemed to

49 New Brunswick Museum Archives & Research Library, Milner Collection, F142-1, typescript dated Cosgrove Priory, Stoney Stratford, 29 March 1833, two months before Edward Stanley introduced the Abolition of Slavery Bill. Cosgrove Priory was Moorsom's father's home where Moorsom settled after his permanent return to England in 1832. I have, therefore, assumed that he wrote the entire document, not just the Halifax report it contains.

number himself) could be met by a redoubled philanthropy. The experiment with freedom was not, however, to be repeated on Nova Scotian soil. Fearful that the Emancipation Act would spark a migration of former slaves as previous imperial decisions had during the American Revolution and the War of 1812, the colonial legislature passed "An Act to prevent the Clandestine Landing of Liberated Slaves ... from Vessels arriving in this Province" in 1834.[50]

The Nova Scotia Experiment Abandoned

Moorsom's report anticipated the end of viewing Nova Scotia's free black communities as an economic experiment. It cast Hammond's Plains as the empire's humanitarian burden for victims of slavery and racism rather than a test of free-labour ideology.[51] Similarly, when the political economist James Duncan Hume testified before the Select Committee on Import Duties in 1840, he exempted colonial sugar from his free-trade principles on the grounds that the abolition of slavery had rendered production in the British West Indies a matter of morality rather than economics. Yet Hume's successor at the Board of Trade, John MacGregor, refused any such exception. Appearing before the same committee, MacGregor insisted that any attempt to use state regulation to encourage the importation of free-labour sugar over foreign, slave-produced sugar was morally repugnant and doomed to fail.[52]

More directly, after emancipation Nova Scotia's free black communities were no longer needed to predict possible consequences; they could be observed directly. For British travellers who also visited the United States and wrote about slavery's persistence there, the relevant experiment in British freedom was now the West Indies, not Nova Scotia.[53] Even those interested in former American slaves living in freedom under the British flag turned more often to Upper Canada, where more recent and explicitly philanthropic black communities swelled with resistance to the U.S. Fugitive Slave Act (1850).

Comments on blacks in Nova Scotia remained routine, but most travellers were now content with a few unsystematic observations of those residing in Halifax. The sort of experimental inquiry typified by MacGregor and Moorsom

50 On Cap. LXIII, *The Statutes of the Province of Nova-Scotia* ..., vol. 4, see Winks, 129.

51 On a parallel shift in perceptions of Sierra Leone, see Drescher, 93–7.

52 Brown, 150, 179, 191–4; and Drescher, 162–3.

53 See James Silk Buckingham, *America: historical, statistics and descriptive*, vol. 1 and 2 (London, 1841), 454 and 466–7; and Charles Lyell, *Travels in North America, in the Years 1841-2*..., vol. 1 (New York, 1845), 131, 192, 209–11; and in *Second Visit*, 12–14, 127–8, a discussion of race and labour in the West Indies was immediately followed by "We landed in Halifax ...," but Lyell did not mention Nova Scotia's blacks; for Buckingham's brief impressions, see *Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the other British Provinces* ... (London, 1843), 320, 341.

disappeared. Hugo Reid's account of Nova Scotia, published during the American Civil War, noted the existence of a nearby settlement of free blacks. Although "the Slavery Question" was the subtitle of his *Sketches of North America*, he made no study of it.[54] After mid-century, there was also more naked racial antipathy and greater interest in skin pigmentation. Readers were amused with samples of black dialect or stories of their ludicrous social pretensions and child-like intelligence more often than they were instructed in any immediate implications for imperial policy.[55]

Of course, such representations retained political import. The absence of slavery and the recognition of formal equality in Britain's North American colonies served as a badge of moral superiority over the antebellum republic.[56] Routinely portraying blacks in Halifax as poor and indolent or as prospering only when serving whites also reinforced the sense that former slaves and their descendants could not succeed on their own.[57] According to the Scottish publisher William Chambers, one of only two post-emancipation British travellers to report on Hammond's Plains or Preston, they were "free of course, but not seemingly much the better for being at their own disposal." The second witness, the sportsman Campbell Hardy, concluded his depressing account of Preston on a more resigned note: "one must not run down poor Sambo; for he is a good-humoured, harmless, and amusing fellow, and when met with in any condition in America, is to be pitied."[58] This was not the activist language of either a political economy committed to material improvement or humanitarian sentiment committed to emancipation, but a condescending sentimentality. It froze an already marginalized group in economic time as a harmless anomaly for whom nothing better could be expected.

The problem of freedom was not so easily ignored by an American visiting on the eve of the Civil War. A local guide gently reminded Frederic S.

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54 Hugo Reid, *Sketches of North America; with some account of Congress and of the Slavery Question* (London, 1861), 190–1. Hugh Murray, *An Historical and Descriptive Account of British America*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh, 1839), 158–9, 212–14, relied heavily on MacGregor and Moorsom for its depiction of blacks in Nova Scotia, but omitted the methodological and policy aspects of their pre-emancipation accounts.

55 See James E. Alexander *L'Acadie* ..., vol. 2 (London, 1849), 129–30; [B.W.A.] Sleigh, *Pine Forests and Hacmatack Clearings...* (London, 1853), 37–8; [E.D. Hammond], *Memoir of Captain M.M. Hammond, Rifle Brigade* (London, 1859), 14; and, especially, N.B. Dennys, *An Account of the Cruise of the St George* ... (London, 1862), x-xi, 168–70.

56 James F.W. Johnston, *Notes on North America* ..., vol. 1 (London, 1851), 7; and John MacGregor, *Our Brothers and Cousins: A Summer Tour in Canada and the States* (London, 1859), xix.

57 McNairn, "'Everything was new, yet familiar'," 43–7, 49–50.

58 Chambers, *Things as They Are in America,* (Edinburgh, 1854), 27–8; and Hardy, *Sporting Adventures in the New World* ..., vol. 2 (London, 1855), 18–19. Reid, 291, also concluded that the "happy disposition" of this "light-hearted and cheerful people" compensated for their poverty.

Cozzens on arriving at Preston that "these are your people, your *fugitives*." "I would, for poor Cuffee's sake," mused Cozzens, a New York wine merchant and humourist, "that much-vaunted British sympathy and British philanthropy had something better to show to an admiring world than the prospect" from a local inn.[59] Material reality in Nova Scotia remained a visible rebuke to the humanitarian promise of empire.

The Nova Scotia Experiment Reconsidered

From the continued profitability of plantation slavery and the arguments of leading British intellectuals and policy-makers, Seymour Drescher concludes, "antislavery's victories came without encouragement from either transatlantic economics or metropolitan economists."[60] Uniting the two, British travellers to Nova Scotia were positively discouraging. Those who wrote when interest in the future of slavery was acute intervened directly in debates about the problem of freedom. Like the more systematic economic thinkers studied by Drescher, they did so by construing colonial communities as laboratories from which to derive predictions about whether black slaves in other colonies would labour effectively if freed. Casting themselves as impartial observers of unmediated colonial sites of new imperial significance, British travellers carefully crafted their observations to conclude that Nova Scotia's already emancipated blacks proved the folly of legislating an end to slavery. Turning to colonial experiments in an attempt to steer policy through what they saw as the shoals of uncertainty, subjective humanitarian sentiment, and economic special interests, they extend Drescher's analysis to a broader range of texts, arguments, and locations. Travellers, however, claimed cultural capital not on the basis of specialized scientific training or arm-chair theorizing, but first-hand colonial observation. They sought particular legitimacy for travel as a mode of inquiry crucial to the imperial state, but their participation in contentious politics threatened that legitimacy and the culture of the transparent fact on which it relied.

British travellers pronounced the Nova Scotia experiment a failure. They joined gradualists and pro-slavery advocates in emphasizing the economic risks of emancipation and the necessity of preparatory steps towards freedom, a position policy-makers accepted in the form of the post-slavery apprenticeship system incorporated into the Emancipation Act. In hindsight, however, they predicted the future in the West Indies less than the reaction to the widely perceived failure of emancipation there: their disgust at compensating the United States for the loss of slaves during the War of 1812 anticipated the view that the £20,000,000 paid to compensate West Indian slave-owners or their creditors

59 Cozzens, *Acadia; or, A Month with the Blue Noses* (New York, 1859), 40–5, 327–9. Paul Cuffee was a prominent African-American colonization advocate in the War of 1812 era.

60 Drescher, 236.

had been wasted; their critique of humanitarianism foreshadowed the backlash against philanthropic sentiment and projects as economic decline in the British West Indies was blamed on the unwillingness of recently emancipated blacks to labour for wages on plantations. Analyzing the perceived failure of an earlier experiment in freedom, British travellers predicted economic disaster, but also portended how it would be interpreted to rebound against blacks and their allies.[61] Ironically, political economy itself was retrospectively elected one of those allies. In his infamous 1849 essay, "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question," Thomas Carlyle re-christened the discipline, sneering at "Exeter Hall Philanthropy and the Dismal Science" for jointly leading the "sacred cause of Black Emancipation."[62] Travellers' application of liberal political economy to Nova Scotia had actually led them to oppose emancipation, although for abolitionists and slaves their conclusions had been dismal nonetheless.

Comparing accounts of Nova Scotia by British travellers writing before and after emancipation reveals a more generalized hardening of racial attitudes reinforced by Carlyle's virulent racism; earlier accounts contained derogatory stereotypes, but later ones indulged in open mockery, paid greater attention to physiognomy, and freely traded in racial epithets. But the former anticipated (and perhaps hastened the transition to) the mid-century emphasis on racial inferiority by offering an explanation of the poverty of free blacks that was both independent of circumstances in Nova Scotia and different from how they explained poverty among non-blacks there. By foregrounding their uniqueness as a group, travellers' prescriptions could be generalized to blacks or slaves throughout the Atlantic world. Even when it led to similar prescriptions, however, the difference between emphasizing group or institution — the difference between MacGregor and Moorsom — made alternative readings of the future of slavery and the economic prospects of blacks in that world possible. If there was any difference between arguments against abolition and those in favour of slavery — never a very meaningful distinction to immediate abolitionists much less to those enslaved — it lay here. Nonetheless, while other groups in Nova Scotia were condemned for their material poverty, only in the case of blacks did it issue in support for the persistence of slavery rather than further integration into markets and greater emulation of their more successful neighbours; that is, for the continued denial of freedom rather than its liberal apotheosis.

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61 Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, class and the Victorians: English attitudes toward the Negro in the mid-nineteenth century* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), and Andrew Porter, "Trusteeship, Anti-slavery, and Humanitarianism," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Potter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 198–221.

62 David M. Levy, *How the Dismal Science Got its Name: Classical Economics and the Ur-Text of Racial Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 19–20, 50. Exeter Hall was the London centre of evangelical philanthropy.

Despite this insidious dynamic, pre-emancipation travellers retained an environmental definition of race centred on acculturation rather than natural or inherited difference. Indeed, both Moorsom and Hunter insisted on the universality of human nature; variation, claimed the latter, was the result of "local and accidental circumstances."[63] New and shared circumstances would produce shared outcomes — eventually. MacGregor pushed at the outer limits of this developmental logic: he minimized the effects of slavery, the most obvious environmental factor; generalized from a particular group of blacks to Africa; and predicted that generations would pass before the universality of human nature manifested itself sufficiently for them to compete successfully with colonial whites. He never explained why those with no experience of slavery remained incompetent and, when testifying before the Extinction Committee, alluded to "the capacity of their mind" as a possible factor in their poverty. Yet he more typically emphasized habits and framed the central question in terms of training those "brought up as the negroes are." He conceded that not all blacks were indolent — the connection was ultimately more correlative than causal — and that "liberal instruction" could transform their economic subjectivity. It was MacGregor's insistence on how long such a transformation would take and that, in the meantime, blacks could benefit from slavery — rather than a biological conception of immutable racial differences — that set him apart from Moorsom and even more from British abolitionists, who believed such change could only commence once slavery was abolished and would be relatively rapid thereafter. Observing blacks already emancipated was the only way to investigate the likely pace of change.[64]

Such an approach to difference reflected travellers' adherence to a liberal empire that extended to their commitment to economic development, certainty in their ability to reason about others impartially from verifiable empirical evidence, confidence in the power of instruction whether of the British public by their own travel texts or of blacks by regulating their labour, and a desire to remake subject peoples and places. As a number of scholars have emphasized, despite its claims to universality and a belief in formally free and equal individuals, nineteenth-century liberalism proved remarkably able to justify exclusion and the inequality of groups, especially in an imperial context.[65] Positioning Nova Scotia's free blacks as presently incapable of exercising free

63 Hunter, 2, 103, and Moorsom, 77.

64 MacGregor, *British America*, vol. 2, 209, and before the Extinction Committee at questions 8408, 8355, 8461. Drescher, 86–7.

65 See esp. Holt and Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). For a study more cognizant of the historical specificity of the many liberalisms than Mehta, see Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

choice as liberal individuals, but potentially able to do so at some undefined future point if properly instructed is a prime example. Yet the further implication often drawn — that such a position demonstrates a contradiction inherent in liberalism — is mistaken. Liberalism proved protean. The differences among West, MacGregor, and Moorsom in a genre typically ignored by intellectual historians of liberalism demonstrate its variability; how liberalism supported arguments for or against abolition or how seemingly slight alterations in the argument generated significantly different conclusions. Finally, those travellers who wrote after emancipation may, like Carlyle, have been more accepting of poetry and sentiment in addition to reportage and statistics and of the integrity of group differences and multiple ways of being in the world as opposed to liberalism's universalism, but the shift was hardly unalloyed gain.

Liberalism's complexity is also evident in how pre-emancipation travellers understood free labour. In response to Drescher's contention that prominent political economists contributed little to the case for free labour, David Brion Davis maintains that a broader, more diffuse free-labour ideology as "the desire to dignify and honor labor ... made the British public in the early industrial era far more receptive to antislavery appeals." Yet British travellers who rejected such appeals did not equate free labour with wage labour and thus did not validate the English social order.[66] They certainly championed industriousness and improvement, but saw land-owning yeomen as the best expression of those values. Their chief complaint was that blacks had, for the most part, failed as agricultural settlers. (Ironically, they may have been settled on inferior land near Halifax precisely to ensure such failure and thus their availability as cheap labour.)[67] Even MacGregor noted that some were employed successfully as sailors and ship stewards or cooks and that as domestic servants they were "generally industrious, obedient, and well provided with food and clothing." They failed, however, at "being their own masters" or "working on their own account," a status MacGregor denied to labourers as well as domestic servants. Preferring to serve others, blacks were better off as slaves in some colonies and domestic servants or labourers in others. MacGregor prescribed a long period of tutelage for blacks precisely "to render his condition equally happy with that of the husbandmen and artisans of Europe, or of their descendants settled in America," not with that of industrial wage labourers. The goal, according to Hunter, was similarly to make them more than "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for whites.[68] In colonies that valorized widespread propertied indepen-

66 David Brion Davis, "Explanations of British Emancipation" in *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 248.

67 Whitfield, 23–4, 53–5.

68 Coke, vol. 2, 129; West, 249; MacGregor, *Sketches*, 126; and Ibid., *British America*, vol. 2, 205–7.

dence, working for wages had yet to shed the connotations of servility and dependence most associated with slavery.

In yet another cruel irony, if travellers had held former slaves in Nova Scotia to a lesser standard of economic freedom than white emigrants, their observations that some blacks found a modicum of economic success in Nova Scotia as labourers and domestic servants could have been an argument *for* emancipation — evidence for the key abolitionist claim that former slaves would work industriously and obediently for wages in the West Indies. Perhaps this explains another easily missed shift in MacGregor's account. In his travel narrative, both domestic service and wage labour were contrasted with economic independence. When testifying before the Extinction Committee, however, he equated domestic service alone with dependence (8395). MacGregor thereby acknowledged that abolitionists drew a starker line between slavery and wage labour than colonial promoters such as himself, who promised white emigrants to Nova Scotia an escape from the negative effects of industrialization in Britain.

When, in 1837, Nova Scotia's lieutenant-governor proposed relocating black refugees to more fertile lands in the province, Colonial Secretary Lord Glenelg thought the notion that free blacks' subsistence was to be achieved "as proprietors of Land and not as Laborers for hire" was "mistaken & mischievous." Glenelg was committed to formal equality under the law and had close ties to philanthropic circles, but the year before he had begun promoting policies aimed at forcing former slaves in the West Indies to work for wages on sugar plantations. Crown land was to be made too expensive for them to purchase without accumulating significant savings. The labour market would be maintained and former slaves would be disciplined by it and their ambition to acquire land rather than by racially-discriminatory legislation. Applying the same logic of incentives to Nova Scotia, Glenelg could not see, if "want and privation" at their current location had "not furnished sufficient inducement to active and industrious habits" among the refugees, how occupying better land would. Like British travellers, Glenelg thought about Nova Scotia's blacks in the context of the broader problem of freedom in the Atlantic world and devised policies accordingly. Also, like British travellers, Glenelg associated freedom not with the absence of restraints, much less the liberty to refuse to work, but with self-discipline. Thus, it was Nova Scotia's "freed Negroes" that prompted John MacGregor to articulate the nature of liberal freedom most clearly:

> we have only to reflect that man, in order to husband and manage the fruits of his labour, as well as to regulate his moral conduct, must be trained from infancy, by example and education, so as to render such a course of life natural and desirable to him; and by which means alone, will he be prepared in due season to act prudently or wisely on his own responsibility.[69]

69 Glenelg to Campbell, 25 October 1837, reproduced in Fergusson, 108–9; Holt, 71–5; and MacGregor, *British America*, vol. 2, 209.

On that, at least, abolitionists and their opponents, philanthropists and political economists, and imperial officials and colonial travellers could agree.

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